

**Bible Study**  
**Proper 25, Year B**  
**October 25, 2015**

**(RCL) 25, Year B: Job 42:1-6,10-17; Ps. 34:1-8 (19-22); Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52**

**Job 42:1-6, 10-17**

If any biblical character endured suffering, it was undoubtedly Job. He lost crops, property, family members, and his health. Job must have had that uncertain feeling that any of us experience when we lose someone or something important to us. Why would God let this happen? Where is God in all of this? Why have my prayers gone unanswered? These kinds of questions are often the first to come to mind, and often to our lips. Through all of Job's suffering and questioning, he refused to "curse God and die" (as his wife suggested). Even sickness and death did not cause Job to lose his faith. He did, however, begin to send up many questions to God. His desire was to make his appeal to God, to defend his own uprightness. In the end, God poetically expounds upon God's own creative acts and sovereign rule over creation. God gives no direct explanation as to Job's suffering, but explains to Job that the Creator does not need to be defensive and explain what God allows to happen. The whole story ends with Job responding in humility, admitting that even many of his questions were misguided, and misunderstood God's mysterious works. Job becomes even more humble than before: "I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job is then rewarded with twice as much as he owned before as a sign of God's blessing.

- The story of Job doesn't give us any direct answers to Job's sufferings, other than that they were allowed. How do you wrestle with the mystery of suffering in the world?
- God does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone (Lam. 3:33). Why do you suppose suffering is allowed in our world?
- God calls God's people to be agents of healing. How are you active in relieving the suffering of others in your community?

**Ps. 34:1-8 (19-22)**

Saint Augustine referred to the Holy Trinity as "the highest origin of all things, and the most perfect beauty, and the most blessed delight." God is not only love and goodness, but in God's very being, is also beauty. All of God's attributes make God desirable and worthy of all praise. God's glory shines down upon us when we turn our hearts toward our Creator in worship. David expresses the worship emanating from his own heart in this beautiful psalm. He says, "Look to him and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed." I've always been fascinated by the imagery here. When a person looks toward God, they become radiant. What does this mean?

Recently, a friend told me about meeting a very holy and kind man, a man who lives his life steeped in prayer and contemplation. My friend described this man as "full of God." There is something different about the presence of those who spend much of their time in God's presence. Many who have met Mother Teresa report something similar. God seems to reflect God's own beauty through those who are close to him. Jesus, the perfect image of God, reflected God's glory in the Transfiguration to Peter, James, and John. The scene is (intentionally!) reminiscent of the Divine Glory revealed to Moses at Sinai.

- Do you ever contemplate the beauty of God? How might imagination play a role in this form of prayer?
- Of all people, Christians should be the most eager to embrace art, poetry, and music as expressions of the goodness and beauty of God. What form of art could you use to express your love for God?
- Have you encountered times of “radiance” during prayer? How can time spent in God’s presence empower us to carry out the mission we are given in Matthew 28?

### **Hebrews 7:23-28**

Hebrews gives us an abundance of rich sacrificial imagery. Our minds are directed toward the Jewish temple system of priesthood and sacrifice, and through that imagery we are shown a new reality. In contrast to the priests of Israel, Jesus’ priesthood is eternal in the heavens, where “he is able to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” Elsewhere, the author tells us that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Christ’s sacrifice, however, was a once-and-for-all event that *did* take away sin. Not only did Jesus die for our sins and reconcile us to God; he also prays for us always. His is a ministry of unceasing prayer, intercession for the “church militant” – those of us living the Christian life, awaiting the New Creation. We enter into this reality every time we approach the altar for Eucharist. The Book of Common Prayer catechism says the Eucharist is “the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself” (p. 859). There are many theological points that one could make about all of this, but one thing is clear: all aspects of Jesus’ ministry are intended to bring us close to God and to keep us in his presence!

- How often do you draw to remembrance an image of Christ praying for you?
- Have you ever thought about this idea of a God who desires nearness with his people as a truth to be shared in evangelism? How would you share that message with someone who is open to hearing about your faith?
- How do you understand Christ to be present in the bread and wine of Eucharist?

### **Mark 10:46-52**

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus hears the cry of desperate, humble Bartimaeus, and encourages him to articulate precisely his need for healing. Bartimaeus wants to see again. Something has made him blind, and only Jesus can open his eyes. Graciously, in response to his humility, the Lord grants him sight. In Mark’s Gospel, this physical healing of blindness immediately follows an episode in which Jesus’ disciples show their blindness to the nature of Christian leadership. Vying for the most prestigious place in heaven, James and John ask Jesus to grant a request. “What is it you want me to do for you?” (Sound familiar?) And they reveal their thirst for power and glory. Jesus sternly corrects them, and goes on to explain the counter-cultural approach to leadership required by his disciples – absolute servanthood. A position of leadership under Jesus means a position of humble, self-giving service. Bartimaeus’ humble request is juxtaposed to the presumptuous request of James and John, as Mark calls his readers into a “teaching moment.” Christ desires humility, and he desires to respond with healing and blessing to requests that are made in absolute humility and dependence.

- The Orthodox Fathers adapted Bartimaeus’ prayer into the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Have you ever considered making this short, humble prayer your own?

- Jesus constantly reminds us that God desires our requests be made known to him. How do you ensure your requests are made in humility?
- Humility is hard. Especially in a culture fixated on self-actualization and “climbing to the top.” What would a Christian model of leadership look like in the average workplace? How do you live out this model in your own life?

*Written by Cameron MacMillan*

*Cameron MacMillan is a senior year seminarian at Nashotah House, working on his MDiv degree, and is a candidate for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Central Florida. Cameron and his wife, Hannah, are expecting their first child. He enjoys outdoor adventures with their border collie, Charleigh. good coffee, and writing creative non-fiction. Cameron’s passions are cross-cultural ministry, evangelism, and liturgical theology.*

*Published by the Office of Mission Communications of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

*© 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*